

Home Improvements: Your Rights and Responsibilities



Please do not carry out any work until you have received permission

As a Midland Heart customer we are happy for you to make improvements to your home, provided you have received approval for the work. Failure to gain permission may result in you being asked to return the property to its original condition at your expense or you may be charged for any remedial works we need to carry out.

You can request to carry out the following improvements (list not exhaustive):

- Replace your bathroom and/or kitchen
- Replace electrical heating or electrical installation (**no gas related improvements will be approved**)
- Replace external or internal doors
- Driveways and pathways
- Laminate flooring
- Sheds
- Satellite dishes (no approval required for cable)

You do not need permission for redecorating the inside of your home, but you must not artex the walls, fix polystyrene tiles to the ceiling or paint any fixtures or fittings including kitchen unit doors.

Carrying out improvements

We will write to you to say if you have been granted permission to make your improvements.

We may attach certain conditions such as:

- Formal planning permission is obtained from the Local Authority
- Your builder must be able to provide proof of public liability insurance
- All materials used must be matching
- Work is carried out in a tradesman like manner and during normal working hours
- Work must be carried out by suitably qualified tradesmen
- We may at our discretion wish to inspect approved works once they are completed

Can we refuse you permission?

We may refuse the improvements if the proposed works:

- May make the property unsuitable for future customers
- Pose a health and safety risk
- Are likely to be objected to by your neighbours
- Fail to meet, or show how they would meet, building or planning regulations
- Aren't in keeping with the rest of the property
- Risk weakening the structure of the building

We will give you a full explanation if your application is refused.

What happens if you move?

Your letter of permission will say if fixtures and fittings you have installed can be removed when you move out. If allowed, you must put your property back to its original condition.

Midland Heart will refund you for part of the cost of the improvement if it qualifies under the Right to Compensation for Improvements. An allowance will be made for the age and condition of the improvement.

You will not get compensation if you are removing the improvement when you leave; did not seek permission for the improvements; or if you are buying your home under the right to buy scheme.

Interior decoration does not qualify for compensation.

How to claim your compensation

You will need to provide enough information to enable us to decide how much compensation you will get. We will need to know:

- Your name and address
- What improvements you have made
- How much each improvement cost (with receipts if possible)
- The date when the improvements began and finished
- Proof of planning permission, where appropriate

How do you get compensation?

You should make a claim for compensation when you tell Midland Heart you want to leave. You will have up to 14 days after your tenancy ends to make a claim. If you need further help, you can

contact hubrepairs@midlandheart.org.uk (and mark for the attention of the Duty Surveyors).

What can you claim for?

You can claim for the cost of materials (but not appliances such as cookers or freezers) and labour costs (but not your own labour). You cannot claim for professional fees or costs associated with planning permission or building regulation approval.

If you received financial assistance (such as a grant) towards the costs, this will be taken off the cost of the improvement. In addition if you owe Midland Heart any money this may be deducted from the compensation.

Compensation may be reduced if the cost of the improvement was too much or the quality higher than if Midland Heart had completed the work.

You can claim up to £3000 for each improvement, but you cannot claim for an improvement worth less than £50.

What to do now?

If you have not already done so, contact us at hubrepairs@midlandheart.org.uk or complete online at www.midlandheart.org.uk for a home improvement application form.

Please read all the notes before you complete the form. It may help you to discuss your plans with a member of the Hub Repairs Team with an email (marked for the attention of the Duty Surveyor) hubrepairs@midlandheart.org.uk before you complete this form. They can advise you of the likelihood of permission being granted.

How to contact us:

Telephone: 0345 60 20 540 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday)
Email: hubrepairs@midlandheart.org.uk
Post: Midland Heart
20 Bath Row
Birmingham
B15 1LZ

Home Improvement Guidance

The following information provides you with recommendations and tips for the type of improvements you may have in mind; which are a minimum standard.

Bathrooms:

Specification

- Baths should be made of enamelled steel, be non-slip and have two grip handles
- Bath panel should be either timber or plastic with easy access to services
- Basins should be mounted on a pedestal or installed in a suitable vanity unit
- Toilets and cisterns should be low level suites, cisterns to be dual flush mechanism
- Seat should be double flap and cover
- Light fittings must be of an enclosed type
- Showers must be of a thermostatic type (preferably Triton Millennium or Mira Advance)
- Electric showers to have pull switch isolation and dedicated a dedicated powersupply
- Scale-master in line de-scaler preferred if required
- Wall tiling – minimum two course to bath and basin surrounds; if a shower is fitted full height tiling is required
- Isolation valves to be fitted to all sanitary fittings for maintenance purposes
- Use fungicidal mastic at abutments to tiles and sanitary fittings to form a waterproof seal
- Electric extract fans to have humidistats and manual override controls fitted, these appliances should be low voltage

Hints

- Check whether Building Control (Local Authority) needs to inspect the works
- White fittings are less expensive and easier to match if damaged
- Floor coverings should be non-slip
- Cross head taps are easier to operate (Pegler is preferred)
- Mechanical extract fans reduce steam and control condensation
- Check water suppliers by-laws as these must be complied with, as must current British Standard Codes of Practice
- Check water pressure and output ratings of showers
- Check on the electrical consumer unit for space for the shower circuit
- Electrical works must be carried in accordance with 17th edition of the NICEIC Regulations and must be undertaken by an NICEIC or ERA approved electrician
- Preferred sanitary range is Armitage Shanks Sandringham or similar quality approved by Midland Heart

Electrical Works:

Specification

- Works must comply with current latest edition of NICEIC regulations. Please ask for details of current edition and also be certified under Part P of the current Building

Regulations (from 2005)

- New works to have RCD protection
- New works will require Building Regulation Approval.
- All fittings to be to British Standards quality
- A copy of all certificates must be sent to Midland Heart. This can be done by email to hubrepairs@midlandheart.org.uk

Hints

- Use only NICEIC/ECA approved electricians, certificates to be provided to Midland Heart on completion of works
- Keep wiring runs simple, and in straight lines
- Avoid unusual or difficult to obtain light fittings, as it may be difficult to obtain replacement bulbs

Fencing/Sheds:

Specification

- For all types of fencing concrete posts of an appropriate length must be used wherever possible
- All timber fences should have concrete or timber gravel boards
- All timber to be suitably treated
- Fence posts to be concreted into ground
- Gates should match the style of fencing
- Sheds should not be larger 1.8 x 2.3metres (6ft x 8ft)
- Sheds may require planning permission
- Sheds should not have electrical supplies unless installed by a qualified electrician
- Electric gates should be installed by a competent electrician

Hints

- Fencing over 1.0 meters high to front and rear boundaries may require Planning Permission and also Building Regulation Approval
- Where no fencing currently exists and you are proposing to install fencing Planning permission may be required
- Gates must not open across the public footpath.
- Check with the Highways Agency

General Building Works:

Specification

- Materials must match existing where ever possible
- Cavity wall and roof void insulation to be installed to current Building Regulation requirements
- Gutters and downpipes to be in black UPVC whilst soffits and fascias must be in white UPVC with suitable venting
- Where possible dry verge and ridge systems to be used

- Where flashings are required these should be in a minimum of code 4 lead, however where possible suitable non metal flashings should be used to reduce the risk of damage from theft
- Isomeric and breathable roof felts to be used wherever possible
- Always use -treated timber

Hints

- Obtain Planning and Building Regulation before you start works
- Use low maintenance products and materials
- Dispose of your rubbish responsibly
- Structural works will require Building Regulation Approval
- Use Gas Safe registered engineers where there are works to the gas supply (Reminder: central heating installations are not permitted). Certificates to Midland Heart upon completion
- Use NICEIC approved electricians for electrical works. Certificates to Midland Heart on completion

Kitchen:

Specification

- Kitchen units must meet BS 6222 Part 2 1997, relating to strength and performance
- Carcass of units must be 18mm thickness
- Units to have adjustable legs
- Unit hinges should open through 180 degrees
- Drawers to have metal sides and runners
- Cooker spaces, minimum 620mm wide
- Worktops minimum of 30mm thickness
- Plumbing services to have isolation valves fitted
- Non-slip flooring required to wet areas
- Minimum 150mm high tile splash back to worktops
- Wall units must be at least 150mm away from cooker space, must not be sited above cooker
- Cookers to have stability brackets fitted
- Gas piping and cooker connections must be carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer and certificate (CP 12) provided on completion
- Washing machine space minimum 620mm wide
- Fridge/freezer space minimum 620mm wide
- Do not site cooker directly behind doors

Hints

- Ensure you have enough power points/ spurs for you requirements (minimum of 7 recommended)
- Fit a mechanical extractor
- Tiled worktops are difficult to repair if damaged
- Metal end/jointing trims make fitting easier

- Tiled cooker spaces are easier to clean down
- Seal between worktops and tiles
- If unsure ask us for help in designing the layout, this save unnecessary costs

Laminate Flooring:

Specification

- Ensure solid floors are level, you may need to lay levelling compound
- Ensure nails etc. are not sticking up on timber floors
- Lay patent underlay, onto which laminate can be fitted
- Ensure floor is free of damp, if necessary lay a damp proofing layer before the insulation layer
- Leave a 10mm gap between layers and any pipe work
- Leave a 10mm gap between laminate and existing skirtings - use packers provided
- Stagger the joints on laminate flooring, lock the tongues where boards abut each other
- Once floor is laid, remove packers and fit provided edge trims (usually glued)

Hints

- Ensure you know where pipe runs after flooring is laid
- If we have to remove laminate flooring to carry out repairs, we cannot guarantee that we will fit it back correctly
- Laminate flooring is noisy to walk on, fit insulation
- Laminate flooring will not be allowed in flats above ground floor level, due to noise issues
- You are responsible for planing bottoms of doors if you have had laminate flooring/carpets fitted
- When you move out we would expect you to remove any laminate flooring you have fitted, failure to do so may result in it being removed and you charged for this

Maintenance/DIY:

Tips

- When fitting shelves or pictures do not drill or knock in nails directly above plug sockets or light switches, as the cable runs are normally drop down from the ceiling to the point
- When fitting shelves ensure that you are using the correct fixing/raw plug for the type of construction, partitions need dri-wall fixings
- When the RCD's (fuses) trip out, before switching back on unplug all appliance if a light bulb has not caused the problem, and then plug in fittings one by one. If the RCD trips again then the last appliance has a fault on it
- Always know where your stop tap is located, and ensure that you can turn it on and off

Plumbing Works:

Specification

- All works to comply to current Building Regulations, Codes of Practice and Water Bylaws
- Compression not soldered fitting only in supply services- NOT plastic push fittings
- All pipe-work to be adequately insulated and securely clipped

- Isolation/ check all fittings or appliances valves to be fitted to allow for easy drain down or isolation

Hints

- Ensure pipe runs are simple and easily accessible
- Ensure stop tap is easy to get to and is working
- Pipes are of adequate size
- Check water pressure and outputs of fittings and appliances.
- Use competent plumbers
- Where works are to gas supply, use Gas Safe registered engineers. Certificates to Midland Heart on completion of works
- Ensure all pipe-work and fittings are fully earth bonded in line with current NICEIC regulations.

Redecoration:

Specification

- When stripping wallpaper do not use a steam stripper as this may damage the plaster
- Do not fit polystyrene tiles to ceilings or walls as they are a fire risk
- Do not apply textured coatings to walls or ceilings
- If decorating the outside of the property, check with Midland Heart first as the property may be in a conservation area or even be a listed building
- Do not use sticky vinyl tiles to cover existing floor finishes

Satellite Dishes/ TV Aerials, Antenna:

Specification

- All equipment must be installed by a competent professional
- Dishes should not exceed 45 centimetres across if to be fitted to a chimney
- Dishes should not exceed 70 centimetres across in all other locations
- If installed on a roof or chimney equipment should not project above the fixing point
- No more than one dish per house
- No more than one dish per block of flats without formal Planning Permission
- On blocks of flats, dishes must not be installed on roof slopes that front onto the highway
- All cabling to be clipped at maximum 50 centimetre spacings
- Dishes and cabling to be removed by residents when they leave

Hints

- Check with Local Authority if Planning permission is required
- If you live in a conservation area or area of outstanding natural beauty, you may require planning consent
- If you live in a listed building you may require Planning Permission
- Select a discreet installation site

Security Installations:

Specification

- Works should comply with current 17th Edition NICEIC regulations
- Cameras if installed must only cover your property and not those adjoining you
- You must advise visitors that they may be recorded on camera (fit a notice)
- Security lights must not inconvenience neighbours
- All cabling to be clipped every 50cm, and runs to be discreet and tidy
- Use suitable external grade cable

Hints

- Data recorded can only be used for personal use and not public display
- You are responsible for servicing and breakdown
- Get a NACOSS approved installer for alarms
- Midland Heart will require electrical certificates from the contractors who undertake these works.
- Ensure you have talked to your neighbours about the proposed installation, especially if its lighting or cameras

Windows and Doors:

Specification

- UPVC frames and double glazed units must be used wherever possible
- Windows to first floor and above must have a restrictor fitted limiting a maximum 100mm opening
- Casement windows to be fitted with easy clean/escape/friction hinges
- Frames and casements to be heat welded and reinforced
- Windows must have internal glazing beads
- Double glazed units minimum of 24mm thickness
- Minimum of 50mm projection on cills
- Ultima autolock window handles are preferred
- Doors should be of a composite construction
- Door frames to be reinforced and be 60-70mm profiles
- Toughened glass to doors, with five lever mortice lock and night latch, security chain, and draught proofing to letter box and plate
- All ironmongery to be gold or anodised finish
- Key lock window handles are not permitted to first floor and above, to meet Fire Officer requirements
- Ensure you provide a fire escape window
- Ensure you obtain a Fensa certificate for the installation as Midland Herat will require a copy of this

Hints

- Check if there are any planning restrictions on you installing UPVC frames